



1025. Facing the Adversary.

No. 1025. AN AFFAIR OF HONOR—FACING THE ADVERSARY.

Louise and Fanchon have quarreled. Fanchon, beautiful, tigerish and graceful, has by her beauty won away the heart of Raoul, the lover of Louise. Driven to despair, maddened by the thought of her lover in the arms of another, Louise has challenged Fanchon to a duel to the death.

French girls, unlike their tenderer American sisters, do not submit tamely under such circumstances and, while pretending not to care, weep their eyes out when alone. Fanchon, scornful, and with curling lip, has accepted the challenge and, having the choice of weapons, has named swords. Seconds have been chosen.

They meet at dawn of a summer morning, beneath the trees. The two girls, formerly the best of friends, stand facing each other, swords at rest, waiting for the word; Louise, alert, inspired by anger and the desire for vengeance, flashes looks of deadly hatred toward her opponent, whose scornful, haughty attitude adds to her offense.





1026. On Guard, Ready!

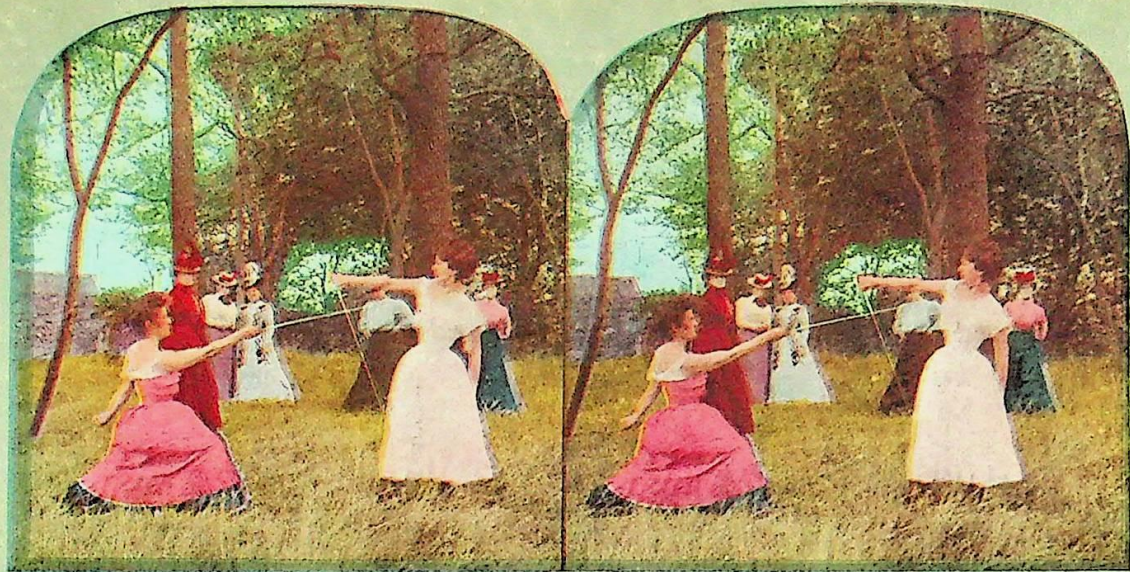
No. 1026. AN AFFAIR OF HONOR—ON GUARD, READY.

On guard—Ready." The word of command releases the combatants from their rigid attitudes. Two swords flame in air and meet with a flash of fire. Like two graceful tigresses the girls, fighting to the death for the love of a man, spring on guard. Like two circles of living fire, their swords flash round and round and meet in ringing clashes. Again and again, when their swords clash, the combatants lock them there and strive by main strength to force each other to yield.

Their beautiful features are seamed with furrows of deadly anger and hatred. Perspiration swells in beads upon their fair foreheads. Hideous passion blots out all loveliness. Their bosoms heave, their eyes flash. The primitive passions are unloosed and in a trice they destroy the fruits of hundreds of years of culture and civilization.

The two beautiful women, turned beasts, lust for each other's blood—and all because a man was fickle.





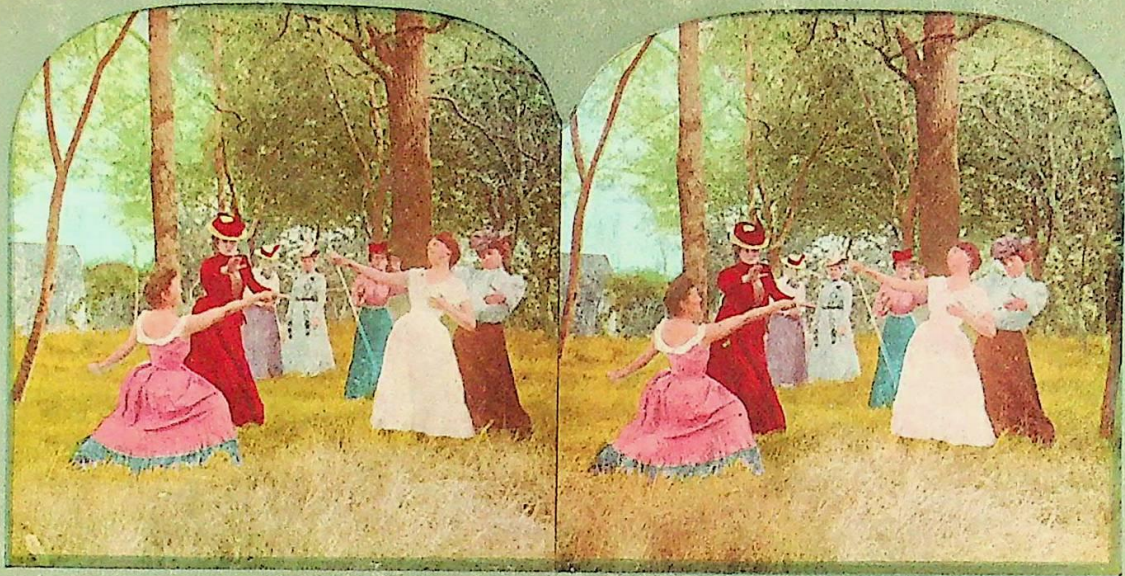
1027. Thrust and Parry.

No. 1027. AN AFFAIR OF HONOR—THRUST AND PARRY.

Round and round the beautiful duelists, no longer beautiful but hideous in their hate, circle, while between them the fire of swords dazzles the seconds. But Louise, weakened by her own wild hatred, breathing heavily, is being forced back. Fanchon, cool, a master of fence, trained by her father, one of the foremost swordsmen of France, presses forward, her lip curled scornfully, her graceful body swaying as easily as if she were waltzing. She is certain of victory; certain that her sword shall pierce the beautiful form of her rival, and that Raoul shall be hers.

Louise feels her strength fading. Her breath is failing. Hot perspiration dims her eyes. The sight of her cool, contemptuous adversary maddens her. With a fierce movement she leaps back a pace, and with the strength born of desperation she lunges. For an instant it seems that the sword has gone through the body of Fanchon, but she stands erect and the seconds see, that with one graceful turn of her wrist she has parried the desperate lunge, and she smiles scornfully as her despairing adversary recovers and springs back to repel the counter thrust.





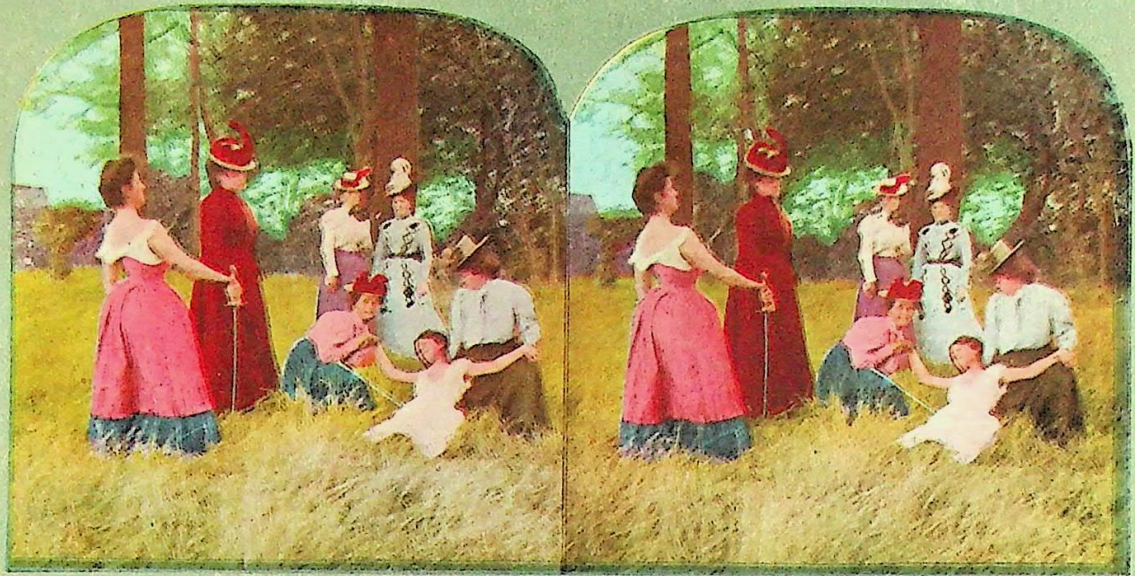
1028. The Home Thrust.

No. 1028. AN AFFAIR OF HONOR—THE HOME THRUST.

Madly and desperately, like an animal driven to bay, Louise strives to stop the advance of her antagonist. Like a tiger playing with her prey, Fanchon advances, step by step, parrying the wild thrusts of her failing foe, watching catlike, every motion, waiting the chance to make the heart thrust that shall finish the duel and end, forever, their rivalry for the love of Raoul.

The swords circle and clash. Vainly and with despair-born strength Louise beats a tattoo upon the sword of her cooler foe, and finds no opening. Suddenly Louise sways, as if to fall. Her guard drops, and, quick as a flash, Fanchon steps in to drive home her glittering blade. As she advances her foot to thrust, it slips. The opportunity is lost and in that second Louise, with a last despairing lunge, drives the glittering point into the fair bosom of her foe.





No. 1029. AN AFFAIR OF HONOR—REVENGED.

Erect, triumphant, revenged, Louise, breathing heavily, her bosom rising and falling, stands at rest, glaring down upon her stricken rival. She is avenged. She has wounded, perhaps killed, Fanchon. Raoul, whom she stole from her, is her own again.

A little stream of blood flows from the dark wound just over the heart. A dark pool gathers upon the fair breast of the girl whose head falls back heavily upon the arm of the friend who supports her, while at the other side kneels her medical friend, anxiously feeling her pulse. The sword point has entered directly over the heart, but being driven upward, has glanced off the rib and missed the vital point. Her life may be saved.

As she gazes upon her fallen adversary, a few moments before her deadly enemy, a few weeks before her bosom friend, the feelings of Louise begin to change. The madness of conflict, the gloating over vengeance, the hatred and horrible anger begin to fade from her beautiful face, and a feeling of pity, a wave of repentance surges through her heart.



1030. Reconciliation.



No. 1030. AN AFFAIR OF HONOR—RECONCILIATION.

With a sob of anguish and pity Louise throws down her sword and springs to the side of Fanchon. All the lust for blood, the wild desire for revenge, all the hatred and jealousy are swept away in the torrent of compassion that wells within her breast.

Tenderly she kneels in the torn and bruised grass at the side of her fallen foe, tenderly she seizes her hand and passionately prays that Fanchon's life may be spared and that she may forgive. When Fanchon's eyes open the first thing they behold is the anguished face of Louise bending over her with eyes tear filled.

"Forgive, Fanchon, forgive and live, that I may make reparation."

"Forgive, Louise? It is I who must beg you to forgive."

In that moment they have realized the worthlessness of the prize for which they strove to take each other's blood and, their eyes open at last, they know that Raoul, the faithless, was unworthy of either, and that their friendship was worth more than the love of any man who would act as he had done.



1031. The Vanquished.

No. 1031. AN AFFAIR OF HONOR—THE VANQUISHED.

The duel is ended and the reconciliation is complete, but Fanchon, badly wounded and weak from loss of blood, yet happy in the restoration of her friend, is being carried to the waiting carriage. The doctor has succeeded in stopping the flow of blood, and declares Fanchon will live. Tenderly Louise places her arm about the wounded girl, and with the assistance of the doctor, supports her toward the carriage to take her to her own home, that she may nurse her.

All the bitterness and the rancor have passed, and between the two, so lately deadly foes, there exists a bond of friendship that nothing ever will sever again. Their volatile French emotions have run the gamut in one short hour, and they realize at last that true friendship is deeper and more lasting than passionate love.